

Arizona Department of Education Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane M. Douglas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Charles Tack
Charles.Tack@azed.gov
602-542-5072

Two Arizona Educators Surprised with \$25,000 Milken Educator Awards

(Phoenix, Ariz., Nov. 16, 2015) – Today, two Arizona teachers received the surprise of a lifetime when they were presented with prestigious Milken Educator Awards—and the \$25,000 cash prizes that come with them—during special assemblies at their schools. Nicki Derryberry, advanced STEM coordinator and a biotechnology teacher at Red Mountain High School in Mesa, and Brittany Matsushino, an English teacher at Vail Unified District's Cienega High School near Tucson, received the awards in recognition of their exemplary achievements as educators and leaders who can be looked at as models for the profession.

"It is my absolute privilege to help recognize truly remarkable teachers like Nicki Derryberry and Brittany Matsushino," said Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas. "There is no doubt that their students, fellow teachers and communities benefit from their passion and knowledge.

"My hope is that this award will allow them to make an even bigger impact for many years to come as models of excellence in the teaching profession on a national level. They are both shining examples of what is great about education in Arizona, and I hope that this award reminds everyone just how much great teachers can impact the lives of their students."

Before her tenure in Mesa Public Schools, Nicki Derryberry was a student intern and teacher in the Chandler Unified School District. Throughout her seven years in education, her high-powered teaching strategies have been noted for motivating students to chart career paths in the sciences.

Derryberry's approaches to teaching are highly creative. At Red Mountain High, she operates her classroom like a company, in which groups of students work at stations and are responsible for their own equipment and materials. This unique classroom structure helps her to engage students in a rigorous educational process, challenging them to think critically, problem-solve and master content-specific vocabulary.

The results of Derryberry's exemplary instruction were evident in the school's Career and Technical Education (CTE) assessment scores and end-of-year student surveys. After her first year at Mesa, all of her students passed the Career and Technical Bioscience state exam, scoring higher than any other school in the district and 15% higher than students the previous year. Additionally, over 95% of her students passed the AIMS science assessment, with 62% exceeding the standard.

Milken 1-1-1

Outside of the classroom, Derryberry serves as the biotechnology team leader and representative for the School Improvement Committee. Consistently proactive at mentoring others and being mentored, she participates in weekly professional learning communities, connects with local K–12 and higher institutions, and presents at the district and state levels on STEM research and instructional best practices.

With six years of education under her belt, Brittany Matsushino puts a laser focus on achievement in her classroom at Cienega, propelling her students to mastery using higher-order questioning techniques, engaging content and a persistence to ensure full understanding. An example is a HALAMA (Historical/Literary/Movie Analysis) project she coordinates, which combines reading, research, analysis and presentations. Students read about a real-life hero of their choice and analyze how the time affected that person's life.

Junior-year teachers praise her former students' abilities to comprehend text and come into the grade well-prepared. Her students' 2014 state AIMS reading scores were at 89% passing, as compared to the state average of 28%, and 76% passing for writing, compared to the state average of 39%.

A Cienega Bobcat through and through, Matsushino is a student council teacher and during the 2014-15 school year, served as co-sponsor of the student council. In this capacity, she spent hours coordinating student events and boosted morale to an all-time high. Student council members put their trust in her to apply real-life solutions to council problems and teach them to make business decisions. She also organized, maintained and ran all club charters and fundraiser approvals.

To fellow faculty, Matsushino has been a cognitive coach and mentor. She has provided crucial guidance to new teachers and has helped them become acclimated to Cienega's culture. Consistently seeking opportunities to make the campus a better place, Matsushino has served as the voice of teachers on the school's site council for the past two years, on which she has helped shape rules and policies to benefit Cienega's future.

Photos and videos from Derryberry's event can be viewed at www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/nicki-derryberry.

For photos and video of Matsushino receiving her Milken Educator Award, visit www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/brittany-matsushino.

The Milken Educator Awards, created by the Milken Family Foundation, were launched in 1987. The Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish.

In Arizona, 36 recipients have been presented with a Milken Educator Award since 1998. This is the second consecutive year Arizona has had two educators honored.

For information about the awards, visit http://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/newsroom/media-kit.